Respond to the Issue for Part 2

Communicate a Position: The Pursuit of National Interests

In this section of the text you have explored ideas that will help you develop a response to the Main Issue for Part 2: ***To what extent should national interests be pursued?*** In this project, you will address this issue by working as a group to investigate the consequences of pursuing national interest either domestically or internationally. Your goal is to decide the degree to which counties and nations should pursue their national interests. The end product of this investigation is the creation of a presentation to your class in which you effectively argue your position.

Planning

- Form groups of three or four students.
- Select two nations to investigate. One nation should be involved in the peaceful pursuit of national interests, while the other should be involved the pursuit of national interests through non-peaceful means, or means that result in conflict or violence. If you choose one of the world's Indigenous nations, you will likely investigate the consequences of pursuing national interests within a nation-state. For instance, you may investigate the First Nations land claims or the pursuit of self-government. The pursuit of sovereignty by some Québécois would also fit this category. If you choose to investigate a nation-state, you will likely—but not necessarily—investigate how it pursues national interests on the international stage.
- Refer to the Skill Paths in Part 2 to review ways to work with the information you gathered during your research.
- Determine what presentation format you will use. You might choose a speech, a multi-media presentation, a pamphlet, booklet, poster campaign, or other format.

Selecting Your Topic

Select a nation or nation-state that has been in the past or is currently involved in the pursuit of national interests. A peaceful pursuit could involve participating in international agreements such as NAFTA, the EU, other regional organizations or partnerships, or the UN. Consider also the successful peaceful resolution of issues by nations within nation-states, for example, the Inuit and the creation of Nunavut. Many Aboriginal issues are presently being negotiated peacefully with the federal government.

At other times, the pursuit of national interests can result in conflict. This conflict could be internal with internal consequences (Canada and Québec sovereignists, for example); internal with international consequences (China and Tibet, for

Examples of the Pursuit of National Interests

Pursuing national interests within a nation-state

- Fiji
- Sri Lanka (Tamil Tigers)
- Zapatistas of Mexico
- Shining Path in Peru
- Québec sovereignty movement/referenda
- Kanesatake standoff at Oka
- Inuit and the creation of Nunavut
- Nisga'a agreement in British Columbia
- Aborigine in Australia
- the Basques in Spain
- increasing Scottish autonomy within the UK
- the Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia

Pursuing national interests beyond nation-state borders

- the First and Second World Wars (there are many instances here to choose from)
- Korean War
- Vietnam War
- acts of terrorism
- the war on terror
- US invasion of Panama, Grenada, Iraq, or Afghanistan
- Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza
- involvement with the United Nations
- peacekeeping; peacemaking
- NATO; NAFTA; EU
- Canada seizing a Spanish vessel in international water
- Canada attempting to defend the Northwest Passage

example); or international with international consequences (the Second World War or the war on terror, for example). For some ideas, see the list above, but you are not limited to these. There are many examples of conflict both past and present, and while it is easy to find examples of violent conflicts, not all acts of pursuing national interest involve violence. Some actions aimed at pursuing national interests may become ultranationalist. How do you decide if an action is ultranationalist? What criteria will you use?

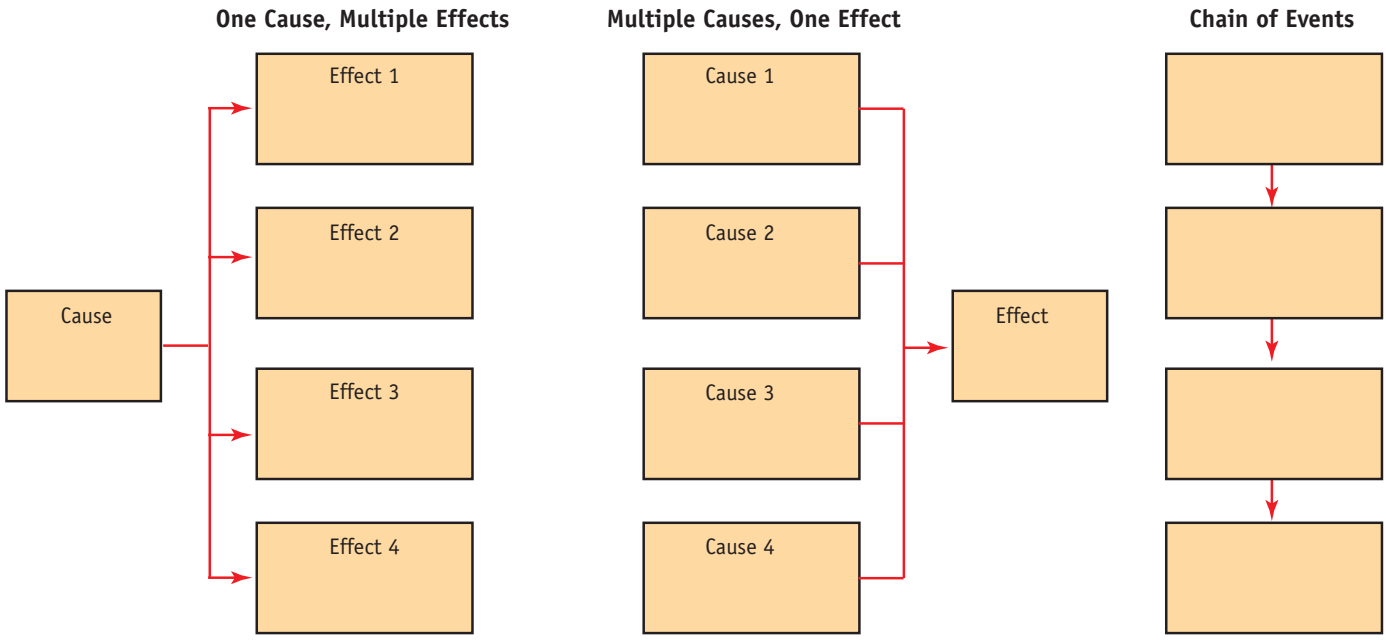
Web Link
To find a list of past and current conflicts in the world, follow the links on the *Perspectives on Nationalism* website.

Thinking Critically

As you gather different perspectives and information on the inquiry, you should apply the critical skills you have been developing in the Skill Paths in Part 2. When involved in the pursuit of national interests, nations may sometimes use propaganda to win the hearts and minds of as many allies as possible. Some of what you find may be propaganda—it may be biased or unreliable. Ensure that you critically analyze all the information you gather. Some examples of pursuing national interests may be considered ultranationalist. How do you decide if an action is ultranationalist? What criteria will you use? Will this label, *ultranationalism*, be a part of your argument in your presentation?

The purpose of your research is to uncover examples of the pursuit of national interests and understand the consequences of this pursuit. Ensure

that you use multiple historical or contemporary sources to get a range of consequences. Consider how you will record and sort this information. One effective way to examine consequences is to develop a cause-and-effect chart that looks at how this pursuit has had implications throughout the nation and the nation-state, as well as globally.



▲ There are many different types of cause-and-effect charts. Try organizing your information using a variety of charts to see which one best represents your findings.

Synthesize Information to Develop a Position

After you have gathered and organized your research, you need to revisit the issue and synthesize the information to develop a position. Organizing information to look at the pros and cons, opportunities and challenges, or advantages and disadvantages and reconsidering the criteria you use is one way of synthesizing your research information.

Your group must come to a common position on the issue: ***To what extent should national interests be pursued?*** Depending on your research, group members may have come to different conclusions. Deciding on a common position may involve compromising on your initial position. Ensure that you make the best decision on which everybody can agree. Do not compromise just to make the group happy.

What makes a historical event significant?

How do you decide if an event is significant? There have been countless events in the distant and near past, and yet we study only certain ones. When conducting your research, how should you determine if an event is worth investigating? How can you determine if an event has a significant impact on a nation?

Several criteria can help you judge significance:

1. Was the event important at the time? Did people realize the importance of the event when it occurred?
2. How many people were affected by the event?
3. Did the event have important consequences? Were the effects of the event experienced for a long time after the event?
4. Is the event a memorable one in society? Did it reveal something about the person or people or the national goals of the groups involved?[1]

Communicate a Position

The goal of this activity is for you and your group to present your views on the issue to the class. The Skill Path in Chapter 10 provided ideas on how to get your position across to others effectively and creatively. Ensure that you explore what resources are available to you to help you determine the best format for your presentation. Remember that effective presentations use both audio and visual components. Check with your teacher to determine whether you should be only presenting your views or also trying to persuade your classmates that your position is best.

Reflect on Your Position

After you have seen all of the presentations, you should regroup and discuss both the decision you made and the presentation you gave. Did you analyze the information critically? Did you synthesize information effectively? Could you have arrived at different conclusions based upon the information you uncovered during your investigation? Was your presentation effective? Would you do things differently next time? If so, which things, and how? Did listening to the other groups' presentations have an effect on your group's position?

Finally, consider how your position on the issue will help you consider the Key Issue for this course: ***To what extent should we embrace nationalism?***

1 Adapted from M. Denos and R. Case, *Teaching about Historical Thinking* (Vancouver: Critical Thinking Consortium, 2006).